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Eminem Album Preview: Slim As Shady As Ever

Rapper addresses more reality-based topics, but in typical over-the-top fashion.

By Shaheem Reid

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The "boogeyman of rap" is busting his gun, pistol-whipping one of his cheating mate's lovers, contemplating other grisly forms of violence and taking a leak on the White House lawn — and that's just by the midpoint of *The Eminem Show.* Yes, ladies and gents, "Shady's back," as he proclaims in his first single, "Without Me," and Eminem still has a lot to vent.

As soon as the curtain opens on Em's third solo album, it's clear all of the rapper's frustrations that have been building up over the last two years since *The Marshall Mathers LP* are going to explode out of the speakers.

"White America," the first song on the album, is a satirical look at why he's seen as the Big Bad Wolf with a mic. "Hip-hop is never a problem in Harlem, only in Boston," he says. Em concedes that if he were African American, maybe people wouldn't be as fascinated with him and that his record sales would probably be cut in half.

But the Eminem phenomenon is deeper than black and white. Besides being one of the best to step into the vocal booth and have his thoughts resonate, many kids give him love because they see a reflection of themselves when they look at Slim Shady. "I go to 'TRL,' look how many hugs I get," he taunts his detractors. What's most scary to parents, however, according to the 28-year-old, is that they too see the similarities between the Detroit rapper and their own children.

"I could be one of your kids," he tells them. "... Little Erick looks just like me/ Erica loves my sh--," he continues before closing with remarks about urinating on the White House's grass.

"Business" commences with a short skit featuring Em and special guest Dr. Dre speaking like Batman and Robin, promising to thwart the villainous wack rappers and save the day. "Marshaaalll," a woman repeatedly sings, reminiscent of a TV show intro. Meanwhile, Em switches his voice to a tone not dissimilar from that of a circus ringmaster, readying the listener for his combustible lyrics as the g-funk-tinged bass lines come in.

"Let's get down to business/ I don't have no time to waste/ What is this?" he says on the chorus. "Must be a circus in town/ We shuttin' this sh– down on these clowns/ Can I get a witness." Em goes on to say he and Dre are the most feared duo since he and Elton John played Russian roulette with their careers two years ago at the Grammy awards.

Gunplay is also a focal point of a skit called "The Kiss." The rapper doesn't mention names, but the events in the interlude are similar to the events police say happened outside the Hot Rock Sports Bar and Music Cafe in Warren, Michigan, in June of 2000 (see [article id="1428611"]"Eminem To Face Weapons, Assault Charges"[/article]). Em is now serving probation for carrying an unloaded concealed weapon, stemming from the incident outside the bar where he allegedly beat John Guerra over the head with a pistol because he was kissing Em's wife at the time, Kimberly Mathers. The two parties have since settled their differences in court and Eminem recently agreed to pay Guerra upwards of $100,000 (see [article id="1453345"]"Eminem To Pay $100,000 To Man Who Kissed His Wife"[/article]).

In "The Kiss," Em is in a car with a friend and he's following his wife. He pulls out a gun and doesn't listen to his friend's warning to put it away. Em tells him there are no bullets in the firearm, and when he sees his girlfriend across the street kissing a man, all chaos breaks out.

The Eminem Show has several other outrageous moments, from Eminem threatening to put anthrax on a woman's Tampax and slapping her with it on the Down South bounce song "Superman," to Bizarre of D12 claiming that his peers' songs have influenced him to commit crimes on the piano-driven "Music Stops." The over-the-top fiction of "Drips" echoes the track "Kim" from *The Marshall Mathers LP.* Em's pregnant girlfriend has been cheating on him with newcomer Obie Trice and all three have contracted an STD and both rappers recount their dealings with the woman.

Many of the tracks on *The Eminem Show* were primarily self-produced, resulting in an LP that sounds more rock than g-funk. And unlike *The Marshall Mathers LP*, *The Eminem Show* finds its star dealing with more reality-based, beleaguering topics, though the three main ladies in his life — his mother, his ex-wife and his daughter, Hailie — are once again the centerpieces.

He may not be in love with prosecutors who want to convict him, as told on "Sing for the Moment," which samples the classic Aerosmith cut "Dream On," or feel like he gets the props he deserves as he spouts on the Nate Dogg-featured "'Till I Collapse." The fact that he feels people will never see him as just Marshall Mathers again doesn't exactly bring a smile to his face either. But like all leading men, he finds that inner strength to come out on top, even if his mother and ex have permanently scarred him. His daughter makes everything worth it.

"When I see my baby I'm not crazy anymore," he croons on "Hailie's Song." Throughout the track, the rapper literally sings the praises of his child. He sometimes feels the world is over and his insecurities could eat him alive, but watching his daughter fills him with pride.